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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 000767

SIPDIS

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TAGS: **PREL PGOV PHUM NU HO**

SUBJECT: AMB. LLORENS JULY 30 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ZELAYA IN MANAGUA

Classified By: Ambassador Robert J. Callahan, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary. In a private, one hour one-on-one meeting followed by a two-hour meeting with members of Zelaya's cabinet, U.S. Ambassador to Honduras Llorens urged President Manuel Zelaya to go on a diplomatic offensive, including travel to the U.S. and Mexico, and help bring the Honduras crisis to a rapid conclusion on the basis of the Arias plan. In the private meeting, Ambassador Llorens cautioned Zelaya that his antics at the Nicaraguan-Honduran border were undermining his cause and the international community's efforts. Ambassador Llorens reiterated the USG's continued recognition of Zelaya as the president of Honduras, our commitment to see a return to the constitutional order in Honduras, and our support for the Arias plan. Zelaya welcomed the idea of a visit to Washington and requested to meet the Secretary as well as to talk to leaders in Congress. Zelaya reaffirmed his support for the Arias proposal but expressed doubts about the de facto regime's willingness to sign. Zelaya also cautioned that if no solution, including his return, is concluded by September 1, he would urge a boycott of the electoral process and declare any outcome of the elections illegitimate. Zelaya also thanked the USG, and Ambassador Llorens personally, for the continued support and the strong symbolic value of the visa sanctions. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In a private one hour one-on-one meeting with Zelaya followed by a two-hour meeting at the Honduran Embassy in Managua also attended by Foreign Minister Rodas, Finance Minister Santos, Energy Minister Moncada, and Minister of the Presidency Flores Lanza, Ambassador Llorens reiterated the USG's strong commitment to supporting Zelaya and seeking a return to the constitutional order, including Zelaya's return to the presidency. Ambassador Llorens also emphasized that the Arias plan is the only way to resolve the crisis, which must be done peacefully. In the private meeting, he cautioned Zelaya that his antics on the Nicaraguan-Honduran border have earned him bad press coverage at home and abroad, have encouraged his opponents, and reinforced the perception that he is another Hugo Chavez. He urged Zelaya to "put on his presidential suit" and take up the diplomatic offensive and help bring the crisis to a rapid conclusion, based on the Arias plan. Zelaya should take the opportunity now to launch a multi-capital diplomatic offensive to reinforce his image of support for democracy and reconciliation, build international support, and increase the pressure on the de facto regime to accept the Arias plan. Ambassador Llorens reaffirmed that Zelaya would be welcomed in Washington and urged that he visit as soon as possible.

¶3. (C) Zelaya welcomed the idea of a visit to Washington and requested a meeting personally with the Secretary. He noted he would also like to meet with leaders in Congress and with civil society leaders to articulate why the restoration of democracy is important to the national security of the U.S. Zelaya noted that he had also received invitations from Mexican President Calderon and from President Lula in Brasil, and would likely visit them in conjunction with travel to Washington. Zelaya indicated that he was looking for more concrete support from the U.S. and would welcome anything he could obtain, noting he did not want to be dependent on Venezuela's Chavez alone. Zelaya repeatedly returned to the threat to security theme, emphasizing the threat "the first coup of this century" represented to democracy in the Hemisphere and warning that its success could lead to others.

¶4. (C) Zelaya reaffirmed his support for the Arias proposal, though he believes Arias gave too much away to the regime in the process. While 2

¶5. (C) Zelaya was thankful for the U.S. support, including support for his family and the strong symbolic value of the visa sanctions. He suggested that the USG also look into the U.S.-based bank accounts of members of the de facto regime. Throughout both meetings, Zelaya emphasized the historic, political, and commercial ties between the U.S. and Honduras and his continued commitment to working with the U.S.

¶6. (U) Embassy Tegucigalpa has cleared on this report.
CALLAHAN